

CREATING A STUDENT-CENTERED CULTURE BUILT ON **CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT**



90day

Superintendent

TRANSITION PLAN REPORT

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November 2, 2016

Dear School Board Members, Staff, Families, Students and the Pittsburgh Community:

As the Superintendent of the Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS), I am pleased to present my 90-Day Transition Plan Report. Since I began as your Superintendent, my primary goal has been to learn as much as I can about PPS. Though I have worked in a variety of educational settings and served as a teacher, principal and central office administrator, it was important to me to understand the District. That included learning about District assets, areas for improvement and what solutions could help advance PPS to a district that graduates students prepared for the jobs of the future.

In order to hear from all voices, I held community listening sessions, meetings with staff at all levels of the District and engaged with students, families and community leaders across the city. As a part of my *Look, Listen and Learn* tour, I visited all 54 of the District's schools, plus two center schools, held nine community forums, in addition to a few special sessions with key groups such as students, principals and teachers. I also requested feedback from all members of the Pittsburgh community through two online surveys. This engagement effort generated feedback from approximately 3,500 individuals and showed me that Pittsburgh residents are passionate about public education and want to work with the District to improve outcomes for students. I have also seen firsthand that PPS staff are hard-working and highly-competent people whom just need to be supported with the appropriate training, resources, and materials.

The enclosed report outlines what I have learned since July, as well as, some of the steps I have taken to help move the District forward on behalf of our students. On December 7th, the Council of Great City Schools, who provided the Transition Teams made up of education experts from across the country, will share their findings.

All of this information will help lay the groundwork for the development of a 5-year strategic plan that will advance PPS into a District that is student-centered and built on continuous improvement. Some of my key findings include:

- The last adoption of PreK–5 English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum was approximately 10 years ago and therefore it is not aligned to the PA Core Standards.
- Central Office staff are integral in District transformation and must be provided professional development on how best to be in service to schools and meet customer service goals.
- Insufficient and uneven investment in technology creates lack of technologically resources District-wide.
- Student voice needs to be a part of our work to transform PPS.

I am committed to serving as a Superintendent that will always put students first and who will make real change that ensures every child receives the highest quality education. Our students deserve a school district and a community that will stand together to ensure they have everything they need to succeed beyond their neighborhood boundaries, beyond Pittsburgh, and on a global scale. By working together, I know we can transform PPS!

Sincerely,



Anthony Hamlet, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools

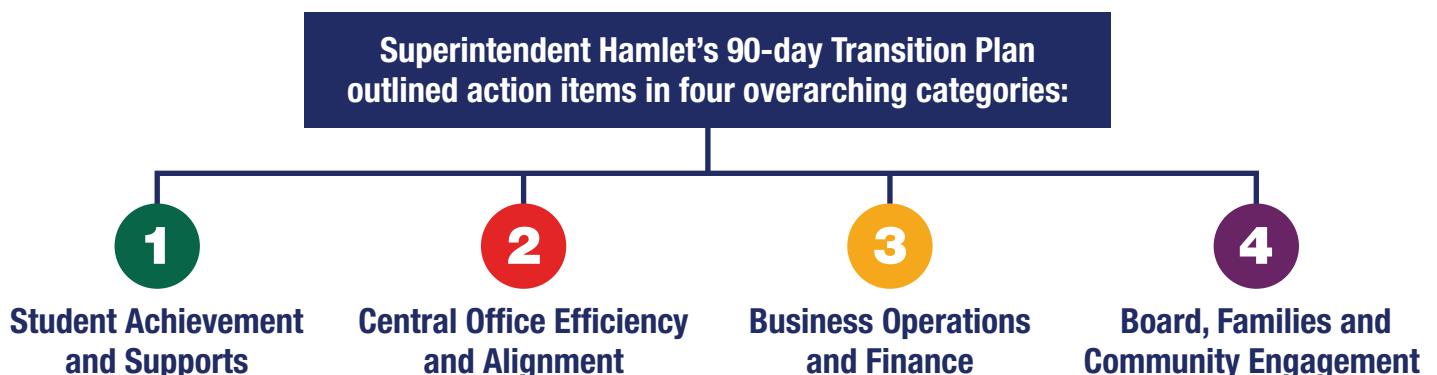
Introduction

Dr. Anthony Hamlet arrived to prepare to take his post as Superintendent in early June 2016 and was sworn in as the Superintendent of Pittsburgh Public Schools on Friday, July 1st. Dr. Hamlet began to engage School Board members, hold individual meetings with stakeholders and Central Office leadership, and talk with members of the Pittsburgh community. These pre-entry activities concluded on July 31st with the announcement of his 90-Day Transition Plan on Monday, August 1st. Designed to create a student-centered school district that allows for continuous improvement, Superintendent Hamlet's 90-Day Transition Plan outlined four goals:



The 90-Day Plan also provided a framework for Dr. Hamlet to achieve the following results by the end of this calendar year, December 2016.

- An independent, third party analysis by a Transition Team made up of education experts from across the country through the Council of Great City Schools* with specific attention to the following five areas:
 - Organizational Structure and Staffing
 - Curriculum/Instructional Programming and Alignment (including English Language Learners and the Program for Students with Exceptionalities)
 - Budget and Business Service
 - Data, Research, Evaluation and Assessment
 - Disciplinary Procedures and Protocols
- Recommendations/Key Findings based on observation, research and feedback from school-based and community outreach.
- The groundwork for development of a five-year strategic plan.



*The Council of Great City Schools is a national organization exclusively representing the needs of urban public schools. <http://www.cgcs.org/>. The Council of Great City Schools will share their findings and recommendations with the Board in early December.

Look, Listen and Learn Tour

An important part of Dr. Hamlet's 90-Day Plan was including multiple ways for him to hear from Pittsburgh Public Schools constituents. To support this effort, Dr. Hamlet launched a *Look, Listen and Learn* Tour. He visited the District's 54 schools, two Center Schools, and met with principals, teachers, and support staff, and engaged more than 3,500 constituents. In addition, nine listening sessions were held across the city. Participants were organized in small working groups and were asked to answer three questions:

- What are assets of the District that must be sustained and preserved?
- What are areas in need of improvement as we look to the future?
- What programs or solutions do you think should be considered by the District in this process?

Four special listening opportunities were provided to the Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers (PFT) union membership, principals, the faith-based community and high school students to provide their perspective. A survey was also launched to reach more constituents. Through this process, the District received feedback from more than 2,500 individuals including leaders of local foundations and organizations. Each of the responses captured in a listening session or online were read and categorized, and those categories were combined into larger themes.

The top themes were then used to create a strategic planning survey which launched in mid-October 2016 and was open for a little over 2 weeks. The survey was designed to provide an additional way for the District to prioritize the feedback from PPS stakeholders and identify the top priority areas for improving student achievement within the District. Over 1,000 individuals responded to the strategic planning survey.

The information received from the strategic planning survey will be shared with the public and key constituents in November. The meetings will help Dr. Hamlet and his leadership team finalize the strategic initiatives that will be the foundation of the District's 5-year strategic plan. The dates of the public strategic plan feedback sessions are listed below:

Wednesday, November 9th

7:00–9:00PM at the
Pittsburgh Langley Library

Monday, November 14th

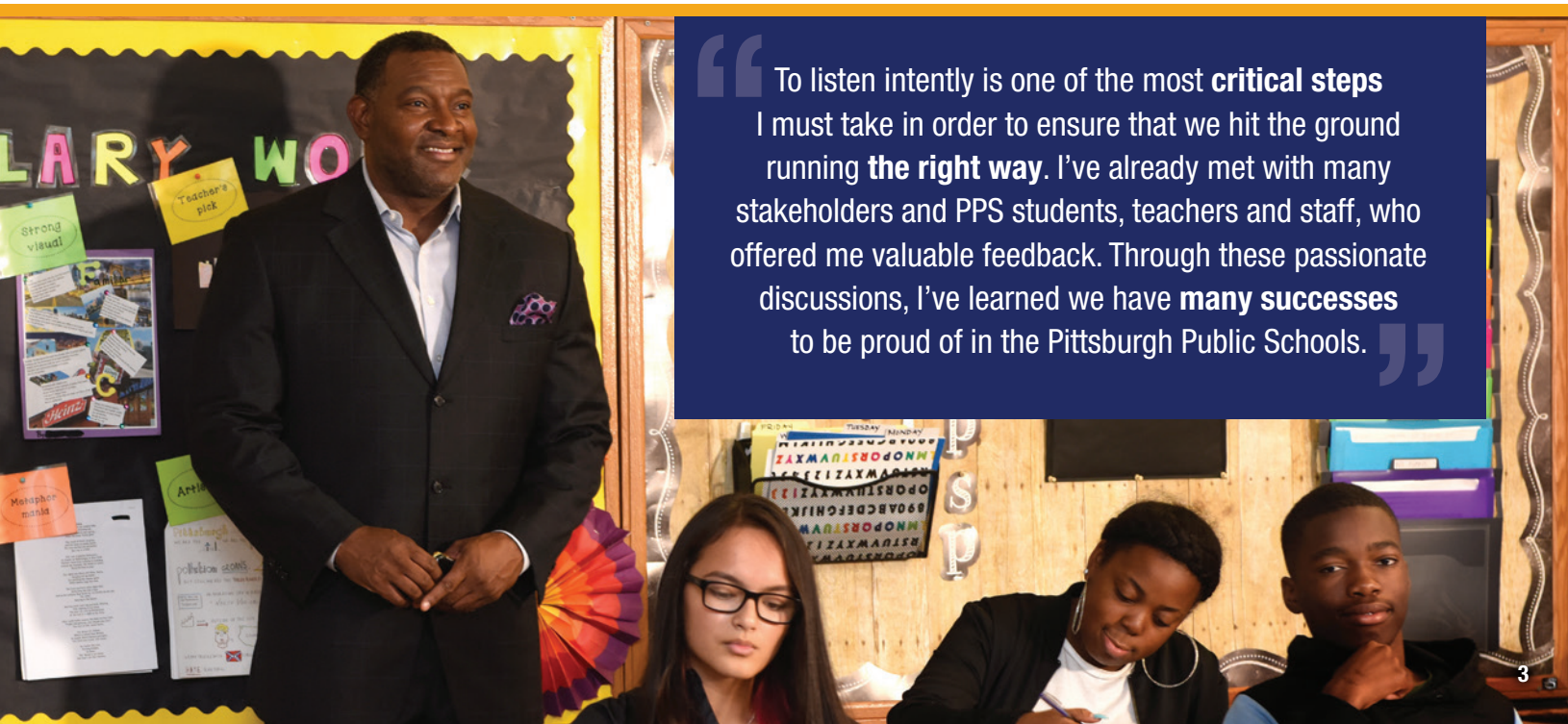
7:00–9:00PM at the
Pittsburgh Westinghouse Gym

Tuesday, November 15th

7:00–9:00PM at the
Pittsburgh King Gym

Thursday, November 17th

7:00–9:00PM at the
Pittsburgh Concord Gym



“ To listen intently is one of the most **critical steps** I must take in order to ensure that we hit the ground running **the right way**. I've already met with many stakeholders and PPS students, teachers and staff, who offered me valuable feedback. Through these passionate discussions, I've learned we have **many successes** to be proud of in the Pittsburgh Public Schools. ”

KEY FINDINGS

Student Achievement and Supports

Dr. Hamlet believes every employee, school-based or at central office, must make it a priority to ensure the District provides each student equity and access to a quality education so that each can graduate college, career and life ready. To ensure quality instruction that is academically rigorous, the District's PreK–12 instructional curricula, pacing guides and unit plans must facilitate optimal learning at every grade level (PreK–12) and among all subgroups.

KEY FINDINGS

- There is a need to shift to a system of standards-based teaching and learning where instruction and curriculum is aligned to the PA Core Standards.
- To address the lack of District-wide formative assessments to inform instruction, an assessment team was established to provide recommendations. The team includes experts in the field, key central office staff, principals and teachers.
- The last adoption of PreK–5 English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum was approximately 10 years ago and therefore it is not aligned to the PA Core Standards. To ensure a new adoption can occur soon, funds have been secured to purchase new curriculum and a selection committee will be formed.
- Though some District schools use Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), the District does not have a consistent framework for how PBIS should be implemented and monitored in every school.
- Further exploration needs to occur to understand the disconnect that exists between our teacher evaluation system that shows 98% of our teachers as distinguished (60%) or proficient (38%) and our student achievement results show that so many students are performing below proficiency on PSSA and Keystone Exams.
- Visits to the District's chronically low performing schools reveal that there is a need to establish instructional non-negotiables and indicators for good instruction. There is also a need to have common language on what rigorous instruction means across the District.
- Teachers need consistent, high-quality professional development focused on classroom instruction and additional professional development opportunities.
- While the District's enrollment in Advanced Placement (AP) courses has increased, the pass rate on AP exams must improve. The District must also consider including assessments that students are taking nationally and internationally and expand our advanced courses and Career and Technical Education (CTE) offerings to middle grade students.
- When determining the educational placements for students with disabilities, the Program for Students with Exceptionalities works to offer the least restrictive environment first. It is important to increase the professional Development of our general education teachers in the area of special education so all students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) receive the supports and services they need to succeed in the classroom.

Student Achievement and Supports: Superintendent Action Items

STATUS	13 ACTION ITEMS – 100% COMPLETE
✓	Evaluate the current assessment calendar with School Performance and Curriculum and Assessment staff.
✓	Review mental and physical health, social services and counseling supports that are in place to meet student needs.
✓	Meet with the District's Instructional Leadership team to review achievement data.
✓	Evaluate strategies that are in place for students who do not meet expectations (academic and behavioral).
✓	Review plans to increase equity and access to advanced classes such as Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB).
✓	Review plan to increase SAT and ACT scores and National Merit Scholars.
✓	Examine how the District identifies students to receive services for Gifted, Special Education, and English Language Learners.
✓	Determine whether curriculum is adequate to meet PA Core Standards.
✓	Review the District-wide employee evaluation system.
✓	Assess the state of professional development for administrators, faculty, and staff.
✓	Evaluate PPS efforts to improve graduation rates.
✓	Analyze the root causes for chronically underperforming schools.
✓	Review and analyze student achievement data by all subgroups.



Central Office Efficiency and Alignment

The District's top priority is providing quality instruction and services to all children attending our schools. Our Central Office staff, led by Executive Leadership, must work together toward that outcome. As part of his 90-Day Transition Plan, Dr. Hamlet assessed each Central Office department and filled important cabinet positions that were open because of pre-planned retirements. To ensure a pool of high-quality candidates, Dr. Hamlet charged the Human Resources team with advertising cabinet positions locally, regionally and nationally. In addition to traditional advertising, the District reached several thousand school administrators in the Northeast and South through an Education Week e-blast. Nearly 300 applicants applied for the positions. A panel of six administrators including Dr. Hamlet then interviewed dozens of those candidates.

“While many viewed the vacancies as a steep challenge, I viewed it as an opportunity to **build a transformative team** and directed staff to bolster recruitment. I'm happy to report that we have a very strong team in place. My newly hired cabinet members have **strong educational backgrounds** and **hands-on experience** teaching and instructing students in urban school settings.”

Dr. Anthony Hamlet, Superintendent

Anthony Anderson Deputy Superintendent, School Support and Accountability

Anthony Anderson served as a former region superintendent for 16 middle schools in Duval County, based in Jacksonville, one of the largest urban school districts in Florida. Prior to Mr. Anderson's educational leadership in Duval County, he served as the principal at Glades Central High School Belle Glade for five years, one of the state's most at-risk schools. The school was chosen as a “model school” for the implementation of Lee County's 2012 reading program. Anderson also served as principal at two other Palm Beach county elementary and middle schools, spanning nearly 11 years in educational leadership positions. Mr. Anderson will supervise the Chief of School Performance, the Chief Academic Officer, and the Executive Director of the Program for Students with Exceptionalities.

“I'm energized by Dr. Hamlet's **collaborative leadership approach** and his vision to make PPS one of the best districts in the nation. I believe that there isn't a job in the world more important than shaping the hopes and dreams of students by providing them with **care, respect** and **robust academic opportunities**.”

Anthony Anderson, Deputy Superintendent

Central Office Efficiency and Alignment (continued)

David May-Stein

Chief of School Performance

David May-Stein has worked for the Pittsburgh Public Schools for 25 years as a teacher, principal and most recently as an assistant superintendent. In his recent role as Assistant Superintendent, May-Stein provided direct support and supervision for 15 schools. In addition, he served as the team leader for the District's crisis response team. He is near completion of his doctorate in Administration from the University of Pittsburgh and earned his master's degree in Public Management from Carnegie Mellon University.

Seema Ramji

Chief Academic Officer

From tailored approaches to improve students' comprehensive reading and writing abilities, to individualized professional development to aid teachers in improving classroom outcomes, Seema Ramji has focused her nearly 10-year career in education on implementing results-oriented programs in challenged urban school settings. A graduate of Columbia University's Teachers College and The George Washington University's Educational Leadership and Administration. Ramji most recently was the Director of Reading and Language Arts for the Dallas Independent School District in Texas. In that role, she oversaw more than 200 schools with over 120,000 students, guiding their improved reading and writing successes. Prior to that she was Director of Elementary Literacy for District of Columbia Public Schools, where she was a key leader in expanding the district's literacy program that ultimately led to nationally recognized gains in the NAEF Reading Assessment.

The Chief Academic Officer position was brought back to the District in order to emphasize the importance of academics.

Dr. Milton Walters

Chief Human Resources Officer

Dr. Milton Walters most recently served the Youngstown City School District in Ohio as its Assistant Superintendent and Chief Human Resources Officer, overseeing student achievement initiatives and implementing talent management and professional development best practices for the district's nearly 1,000 employees. He was an adjunct professor in North Carolina and Maryland, teaching legal compliance, human resources, diversity and leadership, among other subjects. Walters led operations and human resources training and development for non- and for-profit entities in his hometown of New York City. In addition to several educational leadership-based professional certifications, Walters received his Doctorate of business administration from Argosy University and is currently pursuing a second doctorate in Educational Leadership, specializing in K-12 administrative leadership, from Morehead State University.

Interviews have begun for the last remaining Cabinet appointment, Executive Director Equity. This position is critical to overcoming systemic biases that lead to achievement disparities.

In addition to the Deputy Superintendent of School Supports and Accountability and the Chief Human Resources Officer, Dr. Hamlet's direct reports include Erika Fearbry Jones; Executive Director External and Internal Affairs; Ronald Joseph, Chief Operations Officer; Scott Gutowski, Chief Information Officer; and Ebony Pugh, Public Information Officer.

Central Office Efficiency and Alignment (continued)

Errika Fearbry Jones

Executive Director of Internal/External Affairs

Errika Fearbry Jones works directly with the superintendent in all areas of general administration for the District, including oversight to critical and support functions as designated by the superintendent. Jones serves as the key liaison between the Superintendents' Office and the Board Office to ensure a cohesive and positive relationship. She establishes and maintains liaison relationships with community and foundation leaders, as well as, labor and governmental agencies relevant to advancing the educational initiatives of the District. Ms. Jones leads the District's strategies for engaging families and youth, serves as the Administrative Co-Lead for the Educational Partnership with the Wilkinsburg School District, and oversees the Environments that Support Teaching and Learning work streams. Jones has her Bachelor in Business Management from Point Park University.

Scott Gutowski

Chief of Information and Technology

Scott Gutowski provides strategic and tactical direction to the District for information technology—ensuring that the information systems and infrastructure effectively supports the District's mission and strategic plan. Gutowski oversees technology purchases; insuring that the most appropriate and cost-effective technology and staff is selected to address the defined business needs. Leading the information technology management team, he oversees staff responsible for Application Support and Operations, Analytic and Reporting Development, Network Operations, Media Production, Field Support and Project Implementation. He is also responsible for working closely with the technology community within the Pittsburgh region. Gutowski has his Bachelor in Elementary Education from Indiana University of Pennsylvania and a Master in Educational Technology from Northern Arizona University

Ronald Joseph

Chief Operations Officer

Ronald Joseph is responsible for analyzing and monitoring the general fund revenues and expenditures, preparing long-term financial projections and managing the school-based budget development process in conjunction with the implementation of the District's Educational Delivery Model. Joseph is also responsible for Plant Operations, Transportation, School Safety, Food Services, and Facilities Management. He also serves as an integral part of the Wilkinsburg/Westinghouse partnership. Joseph has his Bachelor in Policy and Management from Carnegie Mellon University.

Ebony Pugh

Public Information Officer

Ebony R. Pugh is responsible for creating and managing media relations for the District and its 54 schools, including traditional and social media. In this role, Ms. Pugh works to keep the public informed of District programs, accomplishments, or point of view in an effort to increase an understanding of the Pittsburgh Public Schools experience. In addition to the development of media strategies and marketing/advertising campaigns, Ms. Pugh is responsible for the supervision and production of District related videos and the television program "We Are PPS," which airs on the local cable channels and the District website. Ms. Pugh also provides oversight of District news web content to ensure timely updates of Good News and key initiatives important for the District's overall story of progress. Ms. Pugh often acts as a key spokesperson for the District with external constituencies and stakeholders. Ms. Pugh has her Bachelor of Arts in Communications from University of Pittsburgh and a Masters of Art in Leadership and Liberal Studies from Duquesne University.

Central Office Efficiency and Alignment (continued)

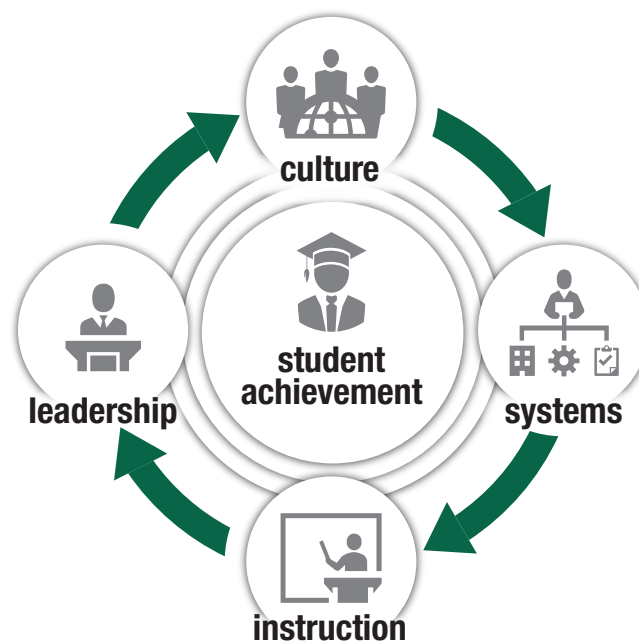
KEY FINDINGS

- Central Office staff are integral in District transformation and must be provided professional development on how best to be in service to schools and meet customer service goals.
- The addition of Assistant Superintendents, whom are responsible for the oversight of schools, and the Executive Director of the Program for Students with Exceptionalities to Cabinet meetings has increased accountability and provides a greater understanding of supports needed at the school-level by Central Office staff.
- Although there are department expectations on what every school should have in place to have a successful start to the school year, there is a need to go beyond the basics and ensure all school-readiness standards are student-focused.
- To further the Board's efforts to create Community Schools, the opening of a Community Schools Position was approved and posted.

“The board is very pleased with the high caliber of candidates brought forward by Dr. Hamlet. The **geographical and experiential diversity** that we see here is exactly what our students and teachers need. We're also excited to act on implementing our plan for community schools. On all fronts, we see evidence that Dr. Hamlet is moving swiftly and effectively in the direction of **district-wide transformation**.”

Dr. Regina Holley, PPS Board President

CREATING A STUDENT-CENTERED CULTURE BUILT ON CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT



Central Office Efficiency and Alignment: Superintendent Action Items

STATUS	8 ACTION ITEMS – 100% COMPLETE
✓	Further evaluate the Central Office organizational structure to determine if departments effectively meet student and school-based staff needs.
✓	Personally interview Central Office Department leads including senior staff to review department strategic plans and current/anticipated staff vacancies.
✓	Review the resumes and briefing papers of department leads.
✓	Hold on-going meetings with senior staff to review school improvement plans, recent student achievement data, and key metric documents.
✓	Assess the communication and decision-making processes of Executive leadership set to determine whether the improvement is needed.
✓	Initiate customer service goals for each department.
✓	Examine the autonomy and decision-making provided to school leaders.
✓	Work with Central Office departments to ensure a successful start of the 2016–2017 school year



“ As a former teacher, principal and district central office administrator, I understand that to transform schools, the central office **must provide a high-level of support** to ensure that teachers and principals have the resources needed in order to create a **student-centered culture** built on collaboration, trust, equity and inclusion. ”

Business Operations and Finance

As a part of Dr. Hamlet's first 90 days, he examined the District's fiscal health, financial procedures and budget. These steps were taken to ensure there is an equitable distribution of resources and can provide quality support to schools and students.

KEY FINDINGS

- Early findings show that resources and personnel need to be allocated equitably and reallocations of resources need to occur based on school and student needs.
- The District has a coordinated central office Crisis Team that can effectively respond to school-based safety concerns however, there is a need to develop more consistent and clear standard operating procedures and training for schools.
- Technological resources are lacking District-wide, revealing that there is an insufficient and uneven investment in technology to support differentiated supports in the classroom. To address this issue, Information Technology has been charged with developing a plan to ensure up-to-date technology in every PreK–8 English Language Arts classroom and increase the District's internet bandwidth to eliminate service interruptions.
- Dr. Hamlet met with nearly 300 bus drivers to listen to their concerns and communicate that they're part of the PPS family. It was the first time a PPS superintendent met with the drivers for at least 15 years. Dr. Hamlet will continue to ride yellow buses to increase his understanding of student transportation needs and parent concerns.



Business Operations and Finance: Superintendent Action Items

STATUS	8 ACTION ITEMS – 100% COMPLETE
✓	Review District financial materials, budget, most recent audit and grants.
✓	Meet with direct reports on budget, operations, and human resources.
✓	Review the professional development budget.
✓	Review Safety, Inclement Weather, and Crisis Communications plans and procedures.
✓	Evaluate school's use of technology and the availability of technological resources.
✓	Review union contracts, pay for performance structures, salary schedules, and employee benefits.
✓	Evaluate three-year rolling budget forecast and allocation of resources to schools.
✓	Meet with Legal Department to review state education code and any outstanding legal obligations.



Board, Family and Community Engagement

In order to transform District schools, the Board and Superintendent must have a positive and collaborative relationship. Upon Dr. Hamlet's arrival he worked to establish productive relationships with each member of the Board and the Board as a whole. A collaborative working relationship will ensure the Board and Superintendent can work together to address governance, management, core values, beliefs and structures. An additional priority of Dr. Hamlet's was to ensure that the needs of the District's many constituents are taken into account. This means communicating with, and listening and responding to, our students and families who want our schools to reflect the city's rich history and culture of hope and hard work. By including community, it will help the District reach its goals. In addition to Dr. Hamlet's *Look, Listen and Learn* tour, he held numerous meetings with key stakeholders across the City to ensure students' needs are being met.

KEY FINDINGS

- City of Pittsburgh residents are not only passionate about their sports teams, they are also passionate about public education and providing supports to all students.
- Stronger relationships are needed with state and local legislators, as well as, the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) to ensure increased awareness and understanding of the District's needs.
- There is a great opportunity to expand our Career and Technical Education (CTE) offerings and ensure existing and new offerings align with the jobs of the future and findings released by Allegheny Conference on Community Development's (ACCD) 2016 report—*Inflection Point: Supply, Demand and the Future of Work in the Pittsburgh Region*.
- The leaders of the Pittsburgh community are ready and willing to support our students academic and out of school time needs.
- School leaders must increase and engage in new strategies to promote their school offerings and the great work occurring in their schools such as an increased use of social media. There is also a need to advance efforts centrally to promote the District.
- A listening session with high school students demonstrated the need to include student voice in the work to transform the District. To help move this effort forward, Superintendent Hamlet will create a student-voice staff position.
- The Pittsburgh Promise™ is seen as an asset to our students and families. However, the District needs to increase the number of students ready to take advantage of the Promise.
- The transition of Wilkinsburg students to Pittsburgh Westinghouse went smoothly. The District will continue to monitor the partnership and work on improving academic outcomes for all students attending Westinghouse.

Board, Family and Community Engagement: Superintendent Action Items

STATUS	5 ACTION ITEMS – 100% COMPLETE
✓	Establish regular meeting times with the Board President.
✓	Arrange a Board retreat to clarify my role and establish goals.
✓	Meet individually with each Board member to continue to build relationships.
✓	Review the District's Communication and engagement efforts.
✓	Collaborate with partners to open lines of communication with the purpose of working together to improve student achievement and fostering honest, transparent relationships.

“As we work together to change Pittsburgh Public Schools for the better, it's important that our students **have a “voice”** in their learning. When young people learn first-hand that their opinions and needs matter, they have a **renewed and increased ownership** over their own learning and begin to **see the value** in cultivating relationships and contributing to their communities.”

Dr. Anthony Hamlet, Superintendent



The logo features the text "90day" in a large, bold, sans-serif font. The "90" is red and yellow, while "day" is orange. Below "90day" is the word "Superintendent" in a smaller, dark blue, sans-serif font. At the bottom, the words "TRANSITION PLAN REPORT" are written in a small, dark blue, sans-serif font, all caps.

90day Superintendent TRANSITION PLAN REPORT

Dr. Hamlet's key findings and feedback from his *Look, Listen and Learn* Tour suggest that the Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS) has a solid foundation to build upon. However, there is a lot of hard work ahead to ensure we are holding high expectations for all of our students and increasing their academic outcomes.

Since the 1980's, the Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS) has faced the same challenges as the City itself. After the steel industry collapsed, unemployment rose to unprecedented levels and families and local businesses left the area. The impacts of those losses to the Pittsburgh economy, communities and infrastructure can still be felt today. The good news is, things are on the rise for the City of Pittsburgh, and that provides a great opportunity for the Pittsburgh Public Schools.

Dr. Hamlet, along with his newly appointed cabinet, are ready to take Pittsburgh Public Schools into the 21st Century by establishing a student-focused culture and making sure principals and teachers have the supports they need.

The findings of Dr. Hamlet's 90-Day Plan are just the beginning of the work that needs to take place over the next five years. We invite families, students, PPS staff and the broader Pittsburgh community to attend an upcoming community meeting to finalize the strategic initiatives that will be the foundation of the District's 5-year Strategic Plan.

By working together, Pittsburgh Public Schools can become a school system that goes above and beyond to prepare all of its students for success regionally, nationally and internationally. It is time for the community to come together and help to transform PPS into a school system that the citizens of Pittsburgh believe in, are proud of and all students graduate college, career and life-ready.

